



Tax Identity Theft Avoidance Starts with the Taxpayer

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MADISON – Tax-related identity theft is an established concern nationwide, as state and federal tax authorities have wrestled for years with a blight of criminals filing fraudulent tax returns using other people’s personally identifiable information. For a scammer, tax identity theft means quick cash. For a victim, it’s a delayed return, concern about who has their personal information, and the fear of what else the criminal might do with these personal details.

“Last year, tax identity theft was a factor in three of every four identity theft complaints that consumers filed with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection,” said Frank Frassetto, Division Administrator for Trade and Consumer Protection. “Federal and state tax authorities have recently put additional safeguards in place to protect the public from this threat during the tax filing process, but taxpayers are chiefly responsible for protecting their own information throughout the year.”

If you run into difficulties when you file, you may be a victim of tax identity theft. If someone misused your identity for a fraudulent return, the IRS or your tax preparer may warn you that multiple returns were filed under your Social Security number, that you owe additional taxes or are facing collection actions for a year you did not file a return, or that you received wages from an employer for whom you did not work.

If you face any of these issues, report the suspected fraud by phone to the IRS (1-800-829-0433) and the Wisconsin Department of Revenue (1-608-266-2486). Contact DATCP’s Consumer Protection Bureau (1-800-422-7128) to inquire about next steps for shoring up your identity. The IRS also advises taxpayers to continue paying their taxes and filing their returns, even if they suspect that they may be victims of identity theft.

“A consumer’s best protection against a criminal filing taxes in your name is to get a jump on the thieves by filing early. Also, if you file your return online, make sure to use up-to-date security software on your computer and set up strong passwords for your tax software login,” said Frassetto.

During the year, follow these simple tips to protect your personally identifiable information:

- Share your sensitive information as rarely as possible. Turn down any request for personal information from an unsolicited caller.
- Don’t carry cards containing sensitive details like your Social Security or Medicare numbers unless you specifically need them (for an appointment, for example).
- Remember that the IRS, United States Treasury and Wisconsin Department of Revenue will NEVER call and threaten you with arrest or legal action about back taxes. Any phone calls of this nature are scams.
- Use online security best practices. Learn how to recognize phishing emails and text messages. Never click on links or download attachments in emails from unknown senders or in emails that seem suspicious.

For additional information or to file a complaint, visit the Consumer Protection Bureau at datcp.wisconsin.gov, call the Consumer Protection Hotline at 1-800-422-7128 or send an e-mail to datcp hotline@wisconsin.gov.

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